



DEATH IN THERAVĀDA BUDDHISM

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ABSTRACT

Death is a certain thing of human beings. On the other hand, it can be said having birth will have death as its shadow. This is a common rule for all living beings. The study about the death is the most important in order to understand about one's own life in the case of realization that, one day, he will compulsorily reach to the death. Moreover, the study of the death is to have a plus attitude about the death and to prepare oneself before engaging to the death. This is the most important for one who is still alive.

The researcher explores the data related with the death in Buddhism by finding out the materials from Tipitaka which is the primary source and the recording of all the teachings of Buddha. Furthermore, the researcher has explored the commentaries (Aṭṭhakakhā) of Tipitaka and other books written by people who are accepted in the Buddhist society, then made a composition together in accordance with this article outline.

The research found that the death in Buddhism means the abandonment of this body and the collapse of the five aggregates (Pañca-Khandā). Buddhism mentioned about the main kind of the death, there are of four kinds : 1.) One dies due to ending his own age, 2.) One dies due to ending his own Karma, 3.) One dies due to ending his own age and Karma, 4.) One dies due to accidents. The preparation before getting to the death is that to do good things in the present life because such good things will effect to the next life. When the death is approaching, one will be calm and will not be afraid of it.

INTRODUCTION:

Death is fearful for all the living things, whether they be, human beings or animals. They are afraid of the death and do not wish to meet it. Whenever, one hears or talks about the death he will feel depressed, despondent and weary in his own life. However, nobody can escape from the death. The death is stable, permanent and certain for every living thing. Having birth will have death at the end. So the death is considered to be the shadow of life.

The death is the nature of life whether one will be pleased or not, one has to totally face with the death at the end of his own life. The natural law of life is that when having birth, sickness, senilities and death will come along with it. When one realizes that this is the nature of life and one day he will face with it sooner or later. To know about the death is to prepare oneself to be ready or to plan one's own life before the arrival of the death. While one is encountering the death one will not be worried and anxious about it.

From this issue, the researcher is interested in deep study about the death in *Theravāda* Buddhism such as what is the death that Buddhism talks about? How many kinds of death in Buddhism? And how can one conduct the death? The researcher believes that to study the death in Buddhism will lead scholars to have a positive thinking about the death including the practice about the death as well.

OBJECTIVES:

- To study about the death in Buddhism
- To study about the kind of the death in Buddhism
- To study about the way of practicing for the death in Buddhism

DEFINITIONS:

This article is limited in the definition as follows:

1. Study about the death in *Theravāda* Buddhism by exploring the data from the *Tipitaka* (The Common Buddhist Text) and Tipitaka's Commentaries including other related books written by people who are accepted in Buddhist societies.
2. Study about the meaning of death including the kind of the death in Buddhism by finding out the data from the books which have been mentioned above.
3. Study about the principles of preparation to be ready for the arrival of death.

GENERAL VIEWS OF DEATH:

Payutto Phikkhu has mentioned about the death in the book "Good Living, Good Death" that life happens following the nature power and the nature rule. It is normal that if having birth, death will come along with it. The death is a permanent rule for every living beings. All the living beings are in the same case that

life is impermanence and unstableness. These are the common rules of lives or all the living beings that is they are a path of the nature. Even though, one will face with such a case because it is a common life. No matter to be sad or to be afraid of sufferings when the life is reaching to the death.

Pañnananda Phikku spoke to the Buddhists in the book (The truth of life) which it can be concluded that Buddhists should look at the dead body as a teacher in order to remind oneself for not-being careless in life. Buddhists should take a chance to study their own lives every time while they are attending funerals by talking to oneself that I will die one day. This means that they are reminding themselves that the death is permanent, we can die any time, and we are not able to know about the place or the date of our deaths. By considering these, one can be relaxed and should not adhere to anything too much when the death comes at the end of life.

Phra Pisan Visalo says in the book "Maranasati (The mindfulness of death)" that in the contemporary world, there are lots of people who are spending their lives by forgetting their own death. They forget to think as one day they will be dead. By this manner, if the arrival of the death appears they miserably die.

There are different views about the death depending on their own stand point such as religions, doctrines, philosophies and beliefs. However, all the view of them can be considered that death is not-having life or this body has no life, not moving, no sense, no action and many more. In addition, everyone must engage with the death. To understand and often be considered about his one own death is necessary in order not to be careless in life.

THE MEANING OF THE DEATH IN BUDDHISM:

All the teachings of Buddha was collected in Pali language. All Buddhist countries accept that the original teachings of Buddha are the teachings which were written by Pali language known as *Tipitaka-Pali*. *Tipitaka* is accepted as the corrected teachings of Buddha, when the deference is requested, it should be referred to the original teachings which are the teachings of Buddha in Pali. On one hand, Buddha spoke Pali language to teach his followers as well.

The term "Death" accords with the term "Marāṇa" in Pali, means the death. Moreover, there are many words which described about the death such as the term "Kālakiriya", translated as doing the time that means one dies, and the terms "Palaya, Maccu, Accaya, Nidana, Anta and Cavana", also mean the death. These terms generally appear in *Tipitaka* (The Common Buddhist Text).

In *Saṅyuttanikāya*, it gives the meaning of the death that death means moving away (*Cuti*) or disappearance, deadly things, the collapse of Five Aggregates (Pañca-Khandhā), the abandonment of body and the vanishing of sense.

In the commentary of *Saṅyuttanikāya*, it is presented that the meaning of the death when ultimately talking about the death only Pañca-Khandha will be vanished, no one dies. One is considered to be dead because of the disappearance of Khandha (All elements of life).

Pali dictionary gives the meaning of the death that death is called **Marāṇa**, translated to the term “Death”. The thing which is the cause of death, called **Marāṇa**.

Accordingly, it can be concluded that death is an abandonment of the body, the collapse of all the elements of the body (*Pañca-Khandha* : *Rūpa, Vetanā, Sañña, Saṅkhāra and Viññāṇa*), the ending of one's own age and not having the breath. These can be called as the death of all living beings.

TYPES OF DEATH IN BUDDHISM:

There are many kinds of causes of the death, looking at the present time, people die because of heart diseases, accidents, cancers and some are killed by others and so on. In Buddhism, these are four kinds of cause of the death as it appears in *Aphidhamaviphaṇī*. Namely:

1. *Āyukhayamarāṇa*: One dies due to ending of his own age.
2. *Kammakhayamarāṇa*: One dies due to ending of his own Karma.
3. *Uphakhayamarāṇa*: One dies due to ending of his own age and Karma.
4. *Uppachedamarāṇa*: One dies due to accidents.

Here are the explanations of the causes of the death.

1. **Āyukhayamarāṇa**: One dies due to ending of his own age. The term “age” means the limited time of life. All living beings such as Tevas, Phrammas, human beings, or animals have their own ages. For instance, Tevatā (Fairies) in the Tāvātīṇsa (The second level heaven) heaven has 1,000 of their ages (One day in Tevatīṇsa equals 100 years in the world of human beings). While the age of human being is 80 -100 years. Someone lives less than his own age and someone lives longer than his own ages. However it depends on other factors as well. Herein, people who die because of ending of their own ages are called *Āyukhayamarāṇa*.
2. **Kammakhayamarāṇa**: One dies due to the finishing of Karma. The term “Karma” means the action causing birth which is called *Chanakamma*. And the Karma which is supported to be alive called *Upathaṃphakakamma*. As the action of this Karma, someone lives for a week, someone lives for two weeks, someone lives for twenty years, someone lives for fifty years, someone lives over their limited ages, and someone dies before their time. These types of the death are called *Kammakhayamarāṇa*.
3. **Uphakhayamarāṇa**: One dies due to the ending of Karma and age that means the action which is supported as a birth and age comes to the end in the same time as if a lamp cannot be lighted because of the finishing of an oil and a lamp wick. This type of death is called *Uphakhayamarāṇa*.
4. **Uppachedamarāṇa**: One dies due to accidents that means one dies despite of his own age and Karma do not come to the end but one dies because of disturbing of the former evil actions. There are many cases of death such as someone is bitten by snakes, someone is stabbed by knives etc, as if a lamp cannot be lighted despite of having an oil and a lamp wick. This type of death is called *Uppachedamarāṇa*.

Accordingly, These four kinds of death can be divided into two kinds, these are *Kalamarāṇa* (dies because of the ending of age) as in the section 1,2 and 3 and *Akalamarāṇa* (dies because of non-ending of age) as in the section 4.

In addition, in some cannons such as *Anguttaranikāya* describes about the different type of death. There are of five kinds as given below:

1. **Chātipaccayamarāṇa**: One dies because of having birth means the birth is the cause of death. Every life in this world, when having birth, the death comes along with it as its own shadow. No one is able to escape from the death. So the death is a common rule for all living beings.
2. **Upakkamamarāṇa**: One dies because of actions (Karma) means one dies because his life is disturbed by the former actions even though the limited time of age is remaining.
3. **Sarasamarāṇa**: One dies following the nature means one dies because of the ending of his own age, such as the age of human being is around eighty. When the age of eighty is full, one has to die.
4. **Āyukhayamarāṇa**: One dies due to ending of his own age means his age comes to the end. Even though his Karma is still remaining but the age comes to the end, so he has to die. For instance, the number eighty is a human being's age when the age comes to the end, human beings have to die. Someone dies before the age of eighty and someone dies after the age of eighty. This can be called the death due to the ending of age.
5. **Puññakhayamarāṇa**: One dies due to ending *Puñña* (Merit). This kind of death is the death of *Teva* and *Prahmma* who are a kind of living crea-

tures. They are suddenly born and die. These types of living creatures are called *Uppapātaka* in Pali. The death of them is called the death due to the ending of merits.

THE PHENOMENON BEFORE DEATH:

Buddhism utters the former phenomenon of death or the sense which occurs to the mind of the person who is getting to die. There are three kinds. Namely:

1. **Marāṇasannakāla**: Time remind to know that death is approaching means there is something that appears to them as the signal of the death such as strange things which has never occurred before, occurred to them. Someone dreams about the messenger of the death and someone has his own's senses about the arrival of the death. This is called *Marāṇasannakāla*.
2. **Marāṇasannavithi**: The thought process (Vithicitta) of mind means all existing creatures occur due to the power of Karma and the thought process occurs along with the arising of the living creatures. While living creatures are existing the thought process is ongoing. When the time of the death is approaching, the power of thought process is very weak and cannot work probably. It can observe a little bit sense. Mostly, it can observe only goodness and evilness. Those goodness and evilness will be indicated tools for bringing new existences where the living creatures are going to be reborn after the death. If the thought process observes goodness, they are going to be reborn in heavens or return to be human beings again. In contrast, if the thought process observes evilness, living creatures are going to be reborn in hell states.
3. **Dying people's senses** means the objects observing mind before reaching the death. There are three kinds: 1) *Kammārammaṇa* means the sense leads to good ways, called *Kusalakamma*, and the sense leads to bad ways called *Akusalakamma*. 2) *Kammanimittārammaṇa* means the frequent actions. When the time to death is approaching, this kind of action will appear to the mind. 3) *Katinimittārammaṇa* means the sense that appears before getting to the death in order to let a person to know the kinds of living creature which he is going to be reborn in the next life.

Any of these senses will appear to the one who is approaching to death. And it can be told about the kinds of existences which he is going to be reborn in the next life. But one will go to be reborn in good places or bad places depending on his own action in the present life.

ARRANGEMENTS BEFORE DEATH:

All existences have to die and no one can be free from the death. The death is a certain thing and cannot be fled. According to the belief of Buddhism, One who does not attend an Arahantship has to be reborn and dies again and again in the circle of rebirth (*Vatṭsaṃsāra*). Someone is reborn in other existences and someone returns to be reborn in this world. The places which living existence go to be reborn are called *Vatṭsaṃsāra*, translated to the circle of rebirth. There are thirty one places. But people who are pure from sins are called *Arahanta* (Non-having sensuality one or an enlightenment one). They will not come to be reborn again in *Vatṭsaṃsāra* because he is out of *Samsāra*.

Samsāra (The circle of rebirth) is divided into two parts namely:

1. **Sukatiphumi**: Good places mean the places for rebirth of one who has done good things in act, in speech or in the state of mind such as who has done Dāna (giving), Sīla (Observing precepts) and Phāvanā (Making mental development) and so on. This kind of person will be reborn in Sukatiphumi after the death.
2. **Dukatiphumi**: Bad places mean the places for rebirth of one who has done bad things in act, in speech or in the state of mind such as killing, taking ungiven things and unfollowing the morality etc, will be reborn in the Dukatiphumi after the death.

Accordingly, to prepare oneself to be ready for the upcoming death in order to be avoided from such bad places and take a rebirth in good places is vital for human beings. Truly, nobody wants to be reborn in bad places. In contrast, everyone totally wants to be reborn in good places. To prepare oneself by doing good things before, the death is important.

THE VIRTUES FOR REBIRTH IN GOOD PLACES:

Buddha talked about the virtues of taking birth in the existence of human beings that is *Pañcasīla* which is called common precepts. There are five kinds. Namely:

1. To abstain from killing living things.
2. To abstain from taking ungiven things.
3. To abstain from sexual misconduct.
4. To abstain from false speech.

5. To abstain from intoxicants causing heedlessness.

For one who will be reborn to be *Tevatā* (Divine beings existences), Moreover than the five precepts as have been mentioned above, there are two more virtues which are called the virtues of being divine beings (God). These are:

1. **Hiri:** Moral shame means being shamed with evil conducts.
2. **Ottappa:** Moral dread means being afraid of the result of the evil conducts.

THE VIRTUES FOR REBIRTH IN PRAHMA WORLD:

The virtues for being Prahmas (God), further than five precepts *Hiri* and *Ottappa* have been mentioned above, is the practice of meditation or scrutiny that means the mental practice. This kind of practice is a high principle in Buddhism. In addition, one who will be reborn in divine world, has to practice the sublime states of mind which is called *Prahmvihāra*. There are four kinds. Namely: 1) Loving or Kindness (*Mettā*) 2), Compassion (*Karuṇā*), 3) Sympathetic joy (*Muditā*) and 4) Equanimity (*Upekkhā*).

THE REBIRTH IN DUGATI PLACES (Unhappy places):

The consequences of actions which are causing to be reborn in bad places, are the bad conducts which one does while he is a human being. One goes to be reborn in those evil places in order to compensate his own bad conducts. After replaying his own bad Karma in the Dugati places, one will be free from those places. Someone comes to be reborn in human being's world. Someone goes to be reborn in the state of Prahma and someone goes to be reborn in other levels of evil places such as hell and animal kingdom as the Buddha's words, in *Āmakadañṇapeyyālavagga*. Here is:

Phikkhu! Living beings who die from this world and again come to be human beings, are a few being. Mostly, they go to be reborn in departed places (*Peta*).

Phikkhu! Living beings who die from the departed being come to be human beings, are a few being. Mostly, they go to be reborn in departed being, hell, or animal kingdoms.

Phikkhu! Living beings who die from the departed being go to be reborn in heaven, are a few beings. Mostly, they go to be reborn in hell, animal kingdoms and departed being as if the dust on the ground are much more than the dust in the hand.

Dugati (Evil places) can be divided into four kinds. These are:

1. **Animal kingdom:** means the place of animals such as elephants, horses, dogs, snakes and so on. One who will be reborn in this place is often consisted of these characters. Namely:

- Having a thought that animals are better than human beings.
- Having a wish to be animals
- Follows or dose the same things as animals do.
- Un-knowing what are good things and bad things
- Do anything following his own mind.

2. **Frightened ghosts:** means the place of ghosts who have strange bodies such as having a massive body but having small eyes. One who will be reborn in this place is often consisted of these characters. Namely:

- Having bright faith means having a belief in something easily without considering about the appropriate reasons.
- Does not believe the advices of the people of knowledge.
- Service oneself by doing deceit others.
- Having a strong ego.
- Do not appreciate other people.

3. **Departed being places:** mean the places of ghosts who have strange bodies. Someone has a massive body. Someone, his body is a human being but his head is like an animal. Someone eats only dirty foods. Someone, in the day time, stay in heavenly palace but in the night time, goes to find and eat stools at cemeteries. One who will be reborn in these places is consisted of these characters. Namely:

- Being stingy.
- Having properties but does not want to spend.

- Un-helping others.

- Do not make donations

- Hiding his own properties

- Values highly on his own properties

4. **Woeful states:** mean the place of punishment of hell creatures. Living beings who are reborn here will be punished with many kinds of penalties depending on their own bad actions which they have done when they were human beings. One who will be reborn in these places is consisted of the violation of five precepts, doing anything without appropriate reason. Mostly, their characters can be seen as follows:

- Normally killing living creatures.
- Taking what not given.
- Doing sexual misconducts.
- Drinking intoxicants causing heedlessness.
- Being ungrateful to the done favor.
- Cursing excellent one.

These characteristics which have been mentioned above are the cause of going to be born in such bad places (*Dukati*). To study about these causes in order to avoid the rebirth in awful places, is a preparation before getting to the death. On the other hand, to remind oneself to conduct only good things and not to do any kinds of bad things which will lead oneself to be reborn in bad places after the death.

In contrast, to study about the molarities in accordance with the teaching of Buddha which is directed to the practicing of his own life, cannot be neglected. To do good things in this life can be affected to the next life. It is to say, doing such good things follow Buddha's teaching is that to prepare oneself for the next life in order to be away from such bad places and be reborn in such good places.

Furthermore, these virtues have been mentioned above can be said that it is the way to be ready for the next life. Doing good things, Not only for the avoidance of the rebirth in bad places and going to be reborn in good places, but also can be effected to the present life. For instance, when one has done good things, he would be happy, respected, and appreciated from others. In contrast, when one has done bad things, he would be in a trouble, distressed in the present life as well.

SUMMARY:

The study about the death in Buddhism by doing the research in *Tipiraka* and *Tipitaka's* commentaries including other books written by people of knowledge, can be concluded that:

The death in Buddhism means the abandonment of this body, the collapsing of the elements of life (*Pañcakkhandha*), the ending of the age of living creatures. Talking in ultimate truth, the death in Buddhism can be said that there is no dead person, saying that this person dies or that person passes away, just only the elements of life perish but in face nobody dies.

The death in Buddhism is mentioned in many books of *Tipitaka*. There are four kinds in brief. These are:

1. One dies due to the ending of age
2. One dies due to the ending of Karma.
3. One dies due to the ending of age and Karma.
4. One dies due to accidents.

The preparation before reaching to the death can be done by studying Buddha's teachings and practicing them because Buddha said that when one does good things he will be reborn in good places, in contrast, when one does bad things he will be reborn in bad places. So it is to say, the preparation of oneself is to be ready for the arrival of the death is that to do good things in this present life. When such good things have been done, one will not be worried about the death as if a commuter is ready to go to travel because all the provisions have been prepared.

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